

THE CONQUEST OF ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN, BY
THE SPANIARDS IN 1781

by

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(Columbia? 1908?) 195-210 p. (Reprinted from the Missouri
historical review, April, 1908)

St. Joseph

MICHIGAN

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THE CONQUEST OF ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN, BY THE
SPANIARDS IN 1781. *

In the issue of the Madrid Gazette, March 12th, 1782, was published the following paragraph:

“By a letter from the Commandant General of the army of operations at Havana, and Governor of Louisiana, his Majesty has advices that a detachment of sixty-five militia men and sixty Indians of the nations Otaguos, Sotu, and Pituami, under the command of Don Eugenio Purre, a captain of militia, accompanied by Don Carlos Tayon, a sub-lieutenant of militia, by Don Luis Chevalier, a man well versed in the language of the Indians, and by their great chiefs Eleturno and Naquigen, who marched the 2d of January, 1781, from the town of St. Luis of the Illinois, had possessed themselves of the post of St. Joseph, which the English occupied at two hundred and twenty leagues distance from that of the above mentioned St. Luis, having suffered in so extensive a march, and so rigorous a season, the greatest inconveniences from cold and hunger, exposed to continual risks from the country being possessed by savage nations, and having no pass over parts covered with snow, and each one being obliged to carry provisions for his own subsistence, and various merchandizes which were necessary to content, in case of need, the barbarous nations through whom they were obliged to cross. The commander, by seasonable negotiations and precautions, prevented a considerable body of Indians, who were at the devotion of the English, from opposing this expedition; for it would otherwise have been difficult to have accomplished the taking of the said post. They made prisoners of the few English they found in it, the others

* Read before the State Historical Society of Missouri December 17, 1907.

having perhaps retired in consequence of some prior notice. Don Eugenio Purre took possession in the name of the King of that place and its dependencies, and of the river of the Illinois; in consequence whereof the standard of his Majesty was there displayed during the whole time. He took the English one, and delivered it on his arrival at St. Luis to Don Francisco Cruyat, [sic] the commandant of that post.

“The destruction of the magazine of provisions and goods which the English had there (the greater part of which was divided among our Indians and those who lived at St. Joseph, as had been offered them in case they did not oppose our troops) was not the only advantage resulting from the success of this expedition, for thereby it became impossible for the English to execute their plan of attacking the fort of St. Luis of the Illinois; and it also served to intimidate these savage nations, and oblige them to promise to remain neuter, which they do at present.” (1)

The account of this expedition as it is narrated in the Madrid Gazette has been followed generally by historians of the West during the Revolutionary days. (2) The customary interpretation of this account may best be exhibited by quoting from a recent work: “Spain had rendered the Americans a great service by enabling Clark to hold what he had already conquered from the British, but she acted with no friendly intent, as her later movements were to show. Though she did not dare, while an ally of France, to attack the territory in Kentucky and Tennessee, where the American settlers were actually in possession, yet she did send an expedition, January, 1781, to capture St. Joseph, a Michigan fort in British hands. The daring exploit was successful, and upon the temporary possession of this single post Spain was suspected of trying to

1. Sparks, Dipl. Correspondence, IV, 425.

2. Windsor, Nar. and Crit. History, VI, 743; Windsor, Westward Movement, 188; McCoy in Mich. Pioneer Collections; XXXV, 549. An exception must be made of Hon. John Moses, who in his History of Illinois, I, 171, points out that the facts do not bear out the Spanish report.

build up a claim to the western territory north as well as south of the Ohio." (3)

Like all recent accounts this interpretation of the Spanish expedition to St. Joseph is based upon an essay by Edward G. Mason in his "Chapters from Illinois History" (4), where he tells the story of this "March of the Spaniards across Illinois" in eighteen pages with no more information on the subject than is afforded by the brief description in the Madrid Gazette; but his description gives evidence of such detailed knowledge that it has carried conviction with it.

Besides the literary importance of this event it acquired a certain diplomatic prominence from the use that the Spanish made of it. Without doubt the demands of diplomacy are responsible for the insertion of this narrative in the Madrid Gazette, for by March 12th European diplomats had become interested in the possible claims to the American soil. When in July, 1782, Mr. Jay met the Spanish Minister, the Count d'Aranda, in conference, the latter claimed for Spain all the eastern bank of the Mississippi on account of the conquest of certain posts on that river and the Illinois made by his nation. It is difficult to judge just how much confidence Spain placed in this conquest of St. Joseph, but she certainly was disposed to make the most of it in her attempt to confine the United States to the land on the Atlantic seaboard. (5)

For more than one reason, therefore, this capture of St. Joseph in the beginning of the year 1781 is of sufficient importance to warrant a new investigation of the sources of our knowledge of the event. It is to be noted that the accounts in the Spanish newspaper and in the histories, which have been based upon this source, make prominent the following points. First, the expedition was sent out by the Spanish Commandant at St. Louis. Second, that the company was composed of Spanish soldiers and Indians. Third, that the commanding officer was a Spaniard. Fourth, that some

3. Van Tyne, American Revolution, in *The American Nation*, 286.

4. P. 293.

5. Sparks, *Dipl. Correspondence*, IV, 478, 483, et seq.

Englishmen and property were captured. Lastly, that the country was taken possession of in the name of Spain. Historians have generally added to these their own interpretation, namely, that the Spaniard had planned this expedition solely for the purpose of acquiring a claim to the eastern bank of the Mississippi. Although the information concerning this expedition to St. Joseph is very meager, still there is sufficient warrant to suspect the truth of almost every one of these points.

Before Spain decided to declare war on Great Britain the Virginians under George Rogers Clark had already occupied the Illinois country, and by act of the Virginia Legislature there had been established the County of Illinois. The boundaries of the new county thus formed were doubtless more or less vague; but there is no evidence that the magistrates appointed to govern this territory ever exercised jurisdiction north of the Illinois river or east of Vincennes on the Wabash. (6) During the year, 1780, the county organization was still in existence, and although the greater part of the Virginia troops were withdrawn in the fall from the French villages by Clark, a small garrison was still maintained at Kaskaskia. (7)

The region north of the Illinois river was naturally claimed by both the Americans and the British, but on the whole the British lieutenant governors of Detroit and Michillimackinac regularly exercised the controlling power over the Indians as far south as the northern boundaries of the county of Illinois. Within the district of Michillimackinac was the small trading post of St. Joseph, (8) situated on the river of the same name near the present town of Niles. (9) St. Joseph was the site of a Jesuit missionary station as early as 1690, and later a fort was built by the French there, and a garrison was generally maintained for the purpose of pro-

6. Illinois Historical Collections, II, LVII.

7. Ibid, XCV.

8. Mich. Pioneer Collections, X, 417.

9. Consult maps printed in Mich. Pioneer Collections, XXXV, 550.

tecting the fur trade of the region. When the British first took possession of the post in 1761 it was placed in the charge of an ensign; but St. Joseph was one of those small posts, so disastrous to the British, that fell a prey to Indian treachery in the conspiracy of Pontiac. (10) After the suppression of that Indian revolt this post was never again permanently garrisoned. (11)

There has been preserved in the Haldimand Collection a census of the post of St. Joseph taken in June, 1780. At that time there were in the village fifteen houses occupied by a population of forty-eight. From the names they appear to be all French or half-breeds. The men of the village were mustered in the militia which, as in other French villages, was probably under the command of a captain of the militia, although this may not have been the case until August, 1780, at which time Governor-General Haldimand approved of Lieutenant-Governor Sinclair's proposal to send a captain of militia to St. Joseph and other places. (13)

Near the village of St. Joseph dwelt the Indian tribe of the Potawatomies. The man who exercised the most influence over these Indians was Louis Chevalier of St. Joseph, who was continually suspected of treachery by the various lieutenant governors of the region; but the latter had been obliged to maintain good relations with him because he alone was able to control the Potawatomies. (14). Although the Potawatomie Indians and the post at St. Joseph lay within the district of Michillimackinac, their relation was far closer with Detroit than with the more northern village and it was to the former place that they went most frequently. Therefore, the lieutenant-governor of Detroit was as much interested in the preservation of peace on the St. Joseph river as his colleagues at Michillimackinac. For this reason Lieutenant-Governor De Peyster of Detroit appointed, in 1780, Dagneau de

10. Parkman, Conspiracy of Pontiac, I, 284.

11. Mich. Pioneer Collections, X, 439.

13. Mich. Pioneer Collections, IX, 567.

14. Mich. Pioneer Collections, IX, 368, 553, XIII, 53.

Quindre lieutenant and Indian agent in the vicinity of St. Joseph. (15)

The traders of the northwest drew many of their furs from the region between Lakes Huron and Michigan and disposed of a considerable amount of their goods to the Indians. St. Joseph was conveniently situated for this trade. In 1779, the principal traders of the Michillimackinac district united to form a company whose purpose was to supply the garrison and Indians with goods. This company of traders maintained a warehouse at the village of St. Joseph in order to keep the Potawatomie Indians in good humor by offering an opportunity for trade. The representatives of the company at the village were Louis Chevalier and Pierre Hurtebisse. (16)

West of the Mississippi river lay the Spanish possessions. This territory had been ceded to Spain by France in 1762, as compensation for her losses in the Seven Years' War. Besides the villages around the mouth of the Mississippi there were few settlements within the Spanish possessions. The capital of the northern district, known as Illinois, was the village of St. Louis which had been founded about fifteen years before. The population was for the most part French, and the village was ruled by a Spanish commander sent from New Orleans. From the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War the Spanish officials on the Mississippi had shown a friendly disposition to the cause of the colonists. Ammunition was bought in New Orleans, and American traders were harbored and protected in the various French villages of the river. These friendly offices continued to be given until the declaration of war by Spain against Great Britain in 1779 made it possible for the Spanish military men of the Mississippi Valley to take a more active part in the events of the region. At New Orleans was stationed Governor Galvez in command of all the territory west of the Mississippi. He was a young man, full of enthusiasm and eager to win for himself

15. Mich. Pioneer Collections, X, 409, XIX, 591.

16. Mich. Pioneer Collections, X, 305, 499.

military renown. As soon as he learned of the declaration of war he realized the danger of his position. At none of the villages had the Spanish stationed a sufficient number of troops to guard against a well-planned invasion by the British. The province was exposed from two directions. East of New Orleans lay the British possessions of West and East Florida, from which an attack could be easily made upon the southern villages, while St. Louis at the north was exposed to an attack from Michillimackinac or Detroit. As a matter of fact a movement from both directions was planned by the British ministry for the Spring of 1780. (17) But before this plan could be put in execution, Governor Galvez, believing that an offensive would be safer than a defensive policy, opened active operations by invading the Floridas. In the fall of 1779 he took the forts at Manchac, Baton Rouge, and Natchez, and the following spring he captured Mobile and Pensacola. (18)

The British plan as far as it included an expedition from the south up the Mississippi river was thus foiled; but the proposed attack upon St. Louis and the French villages of Kaskaskia and Cahokia, held by the Virginians, could be still carried out. It is unnecessary for our purpose to enter into the details of the British expedition that was sent out by Lieutenant-Governor Sinclair from Michillimackinac. It arrived before St. Louis and Cahokia on May 26, but the Spanish and Americans had received news of the proposed attack previously and were prepared to give each other mutual aid. On account of the preparations and also through the treachery of some Indian partisans belonging to the British company the undertaking was a complete failure; and after inflicting a slight loss, the British were forced to make a hurried retreat. (19) The consequence, however, of these campaigns in the north and south was to bring Spain into the very midst of western war

17. Can. Archives B, 43, 153.

18. Van Tyne, *American Revolution, in The American Nation*, 286; Gayarre, *History of Louisiana*, 121, et seq.

19. Mo. Hist. Society, *Collections*, II, No. 6.

and intrigue. From this time on it was her policy to maintain her position against the British, and for this purpose she was obliged to keep on good terms with the Americans and to make common cause with them. This she did throughout the summer and fall of 1780. Immediately after the failure of the British attack upon St. Louis, George Rogers Clark sent Colonel Montgomery with a company of Virginians and French to carry the war into the Indian country around Rock river, and in this the Spaniards co-operated. (20) On July 25th, the Spanish commandant sent Gabriel Cerre to Cahokia to request the court of that village to furnish twenty-five men to join a like number from St. Louis on a reconnoitering expedition to the northward. (21)

The failure of the British to surprise St. Louis and the American Villages did not deter them from other attempts. The region around the Illinois river and as far south as Kentucky was harrassed by Indian war parties so that outlying settlements could not be maintained. Peoria, on the Illinois river, where the Virginians had stationed captain of militia, was abandoned during the summer and the inhabitants sought refuge at Cahokia. (22)

Such was the situation in the West, when the series of events occurred that led to two seizures of St. Joseph, the last of which was to be raised to prominence by the Spanish in the diplomatic game played in Europe. In the summer of 1780 there appeared in the French villages of the county of Illinois a French officer, Augustin Mottin de la Balme, whose avowed purpose was to raise a company of volunteers to attack Detroit, and then to lead them on to Canada. It is probable that his mission was connected with a plan of Washington and the French allies to create a diversion in Canada in order to veil their real purpose of attacking New York. (23) De

20. Illinois Historical Collections, II, 541.

21. Illinois Historical Collection, II, 59 and 61.

22. Illinois Historical Collection, II, XCIII.

23. I have discussed this question fully and quoted all the authorities in the Introduction to Ill. Hist. Collections, II, LXXXIX.

la Balme found that the French people of the villages had been estranged from the American cause by the oppressive and tyrannical acts of the Virginian officers and troops. By carefully separating the cause upheld by Congress from that of a single state, and by laying great stress on the interests of France in his undertaking, he managed to raise a force of about eighty Frenchmen and Indians. While he was thus engaged, he received naturally no support from the Virginia officers. Colonel Montgomery, in command of the Illinois troops at the time, did not seek his acquaintance, nor did he attempt to put an end to his activities. (24) Exactly how the Spanish commandant, Cruzat, received De la Balme is doubtful. The latter was in St. Louis and probably made a formal call. Governor Galvez later commended the commandant for his "prudent conduct" toward the French official. How he showed his prudence is not actually known; but Captain McCarty, a native of Cahokia and officer in the Illinois battalion, reported that, "the Spanish Commander hath given him no Countenance whatever and is Surprised he is Suffered on our Side, he being Authorized by no State or Power in America to do what he does." (25)

De la Balme chose Ouiatanon as the place of rendezvous, and here the little band was assembled on the eighteenth of October, and the white flag of France unfurled. (26) The plan of campaign was to march to the small post at Miami, thence to Detroit, where it was expected that the French inhabitants would join them. After securing Detroit, Sandusky and Michillimackinac were to be overpowered. (27) They reached Miama the latter part of October and were successful in occupying the place. (28) But the Indians soon after assem-

24. McCarty's Journal in Ill. Hist. Collections, II, 620.

25. Galvez to Cruzat, Feb. 15, 1781. General Archives of the Indies, Seville; McCarty's Journal, in Ill. Hist. Collections, II, 621. Cruzat wrote De la Balme a letter on Sept. 29, Can. Arch. 184-2, 468.

26. Can. Arch. 184-2, 465, et seq.

27. Can. Arch. 184-2, 469, et seq.

28. De la Balme's Journal would indicate that Miami was occupied by October 27, Can. Archives, 184-2, 419 et seq., but Lieutenant Governor De Peyster says that this occurred about November 3d. Mich. Pioneer Collections, XIX, 581.

bled and attacked the party, killing thirty, among whom was De la Balme. (29)

While this force was moving on Detroit, a detachment from Cahokia under the command of Jean Baptiste Hamelin was sent against St. Joseph. During the summer that village had been the general assembling place of the Indian war parties, in which the Potawatomes generally participated; but the expedition of the Americans, French, and Spanish under the command of Colonel Montgomery, which Clark had sent, immediately after the British attack on St. Louis on May 26, to make reprisals on the Indian towns to the north and which reached the vicinity of Chicago, made Lieutenant Governor Sinclair fear the loss of St. Joseph. Knowing well the treacherous nature of the principal inhabitant, Louis Chevalier, he determined to secure him, and if we are to believe the testimony of Chevalier himself, to remove all the inhabitants of the village. Sinclair himself writes concerning this: "Wishing to get over the difficulty which I foresaw would arise from the presence of Mr. Ainse, late Interpreter at this Post, I sent him to St. Joseph's to bring in his Uncle, Mr. Chevalier, and the other lawless strange class of People at that Place, for many years settled for the sole purpose of overawing Commerce and making themselves useful for whoever did most for their services." (30) That all the inhabitants were removed, as the witnesses testify, does not appear possible, and, if they were, some must have found their way back again; but the two most important inhabitants were taken away at this critical time, and finally they went to Montreal where they still were in October of the same year. (31)

We have already seen that the company of Michillimackinac merchants had a warehouse at St. Joseph. In the fall of 1780 the company had been dissolved, but, according to the statement of its members, goods to the value of thirty thousand

29. Mich. Pioneer Collections, XIX, 581.

30. Mich. Pioneer Collections, IX, 569; but see the testimony of Chevalier and Ainse in *Ibid*, 435, 439.

31. Mich. Pioneer Collections, IX, 579, 658.

livres were still in the village besides property of private merchants worth thirty-two thousand livers. (32)

St. Joseph was, therefore, in a weakened condition to repel the unexpected attack of the Cahokians and offered the chance of rich booty. In the little band that threatened it there were only sixteen or seventeen men; but these were successful in surprising the village at the time the Potawatomies were absent on their hunt, and took twenty-two prisoners and seized all the property of the merchants. (33) They then began to retreat towards Chicago. Lieutenant Dagneau de Quindre, who had been stationed near the village by the lieutenant governor of Detroit, immediately assembled the Indians and pursued them. He overtook the Cahokia party on December 5th at a place called Petite Fort, near Calumet river, and, upon their refusal to surrender, began the attack. Of the Cahokians four were killed, two wounded and seven taken prisoners, the others making good their escape. (34)

We have now reached the time of the famous Spanish capture of St. Joseph. When the men who had escaped from the disaster returned to Cahokia, the excitement of the villagers was intense. The loss of their citizens called for revenge and the hope of recapturing the lost booty added another incentive. The clamor for a new expedition was probably intensified by the voices of the inhabitants of Peoria, led by Jean Baptiste Mailhet, who had been forced to desert their little settlement to seek refuge in Cahokia from the Indian war bands that had been roaming in the region all summer. (35)

32. Mich. Pioneer Collections, X, 367.

33. Va. State Papers, I, 465; Mich. Pioneer Collections, IX, 630, XIX, 591.

34. Account of Lieutenant Governor De Peyster, January 8, 1781, in Mich. Pioneer Collections, XIX, 591. I prefer this account to that related later by Sinclair of Michillimacinac, who gives the glory of this success to one of the merchants, named Campion. Evidently the merchants of Michillimacinac spread this latter report, for they sought compensation for their losses from the government and gave as their reason the brave conduct of the traders at St. Joseph. Mich. Pioneer Collections, IX, 629, X, 465.

35. Ill. Hist. Collections, II, consult index under Mailhet.

Cahokia was at the time practically an independent village-state. The Virginia troops had been recalled to Kaskaskia in the fall of 1779, and the village was garrisoned only for a short time in the summer of 1780 after Montgomery's expedition to Rock River. (36) In the fall of the year even Kaskaskia was abandoned by the Virginians and a small company of troops under Captain Rogers was left to watch events. Even had there been American troops to call upon, the magistrates of Cahokia were so disgusted by the previous tyranny of Clark's soldiers that they would not have desired American co-operation. This alienation of the Cahokians had been intensified by the words of De la Balme, who had appealed to their manhood as Frenchmen. Also the proposed expedition was one in which the Virginians could hardly be associated, since it was to continue the work of De la Balme whom they had never recognized.

It was not strange that the magistrates of Cahokia appealed to St. Louis for assistance in this time of need, for they had co-operated throughout the summer with the Spaniards in repelling the British. Quickly the company of troops was raised; Cahokia furnished twenty men and St. Louis thirty. To these were added two hundred Indians. They were fortunate in securing the assistance of a man well acquainted with St. Joseph and a friend of the Potawatomie Indians, Louis Chevalier, the son of that Louis Chevalier, whom Lieutenant Governor Sinclair had removed from his home and who was at this time still in Montreal petitioning for redress. (37) The company started on January 2nd, just twenty-eight days after the previous defeat. Through the negotiations of Louis Chevalier with the Indians they had little trouble in surprising the few traders in the village and seizing the plunder, which was

36. Ill. Hist. Collections, II, 541.

37. This identification is probable. Chevalier had a son, Louis or Louison, as he was called—Mich. Pioneer Collections, IX, 354. From the account in the Madrid Gazette it is evident that the Luis Chevalier who guided the expedition was very familiar with the Indians around St. Joseph.

divided among the party and the Indians of the neighborhood. It is evident that they did not wait twenty-four hours, for they were not in the village the day after their attack, when Lieutenant de Quindre appeared and tried without success to arouse the Indians as he had done on the previous occasion.

The sources of information upon which the foregoing account is based are not of such a character as to invalidate completely the narrative printed in the Madrid Gazette, but are certainly sufficient to throw doubt on the truthfulness of the Spanish account. We have the testimony of one unbiased witness to this affair. Captain McCarty was in Cahokia and St. Louis during the fall of the year and probably remained there through the winter. (38) In a letter to Colonel Slaughter on January 27, 1781, after mentioning the defeat of Colonel De la Balme, he continues in an incidental manner, as follows: "There now is a party of 30 Spaniards and 20 Cahokians, and 200 Indians to take revenge on the people of St. Joseph of whom we have no news as yet." (39) Besides McCarty's testimony we have a story which was told in Cahokia and which Governor John Reynolds heard from the lips of one of the survivors of the first expedition against St. Joseph. The story as interpreted by Reynolds is all wrong even to the date, but there are certain significant facts about it. The Spanish cooperation is not mentioned at all, and the expedition was entirely Cahokian, undertaken to revenge the defeat of the party which had made a previous attack on St. Joseph. The leader was Jean Baptiste Mailhet of Peoria. (40) When these bits of information are interpreted in the light of the history of the previous expedition and of conditions existing on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, a consistent story can be made out that is not in accord with the Spanish account.

Some information of value comes to us from Spanish sources. I have before me a letter written by Governor Galvez

38. See his Journal in Ill. Hist. Collections, II, 620, and his letter in Va. State Papers, I, 465.

39. Va. State Papers, I, 465.

40. Paulette Meillet Reynolds calls him. Pioneer History of Illinois, 97.

to Commandant Cruzat of St. Louis on February 15, 1781. It is an answer to the several letters from Cruzat written between September 26th and December 22nd. Galvez takes up the subjects of Cruzat's letters in their chronological order, so that it is possible not only to know the Governor's opinion on the situation in the north but also the subjects concerning which Cruzat had written. The subject of an attack on British territory north of the Illinois river is not mentioned once, but instructions are given to maintain twelve men on the Illinois river. As late as December 22nd, eleven days before the second expedition set out for St. Joseph, Cruzat at St. Louis knew nothing about it, yet we must suppose that those who had escaped capture at the Calumet river on December 5th had reached Cahokia by that time. From the tone of the letter we should judge the Spanish governor had at heart the interests of the Americans and there is nothing to indicate that he had instructions from home to play them false. In fact his only instructions were to keep his expenses down as far as was consistent with maintaining the defense. (41)

In interpreting the facts of this expedition we must have in mind the desires of the Spanish government to gain possession of the eastern bank of the Mississippi river. There was every reason why a marauding expedition in the far west should be magnified into a Spanish military expedition by the time the account of it had reached Madrid. The game of politics demanded it.

If we turn to the English and Indian accounts of the capture of the village, there is nothing to support the theory that it was the result of a dignified military campaign such as the

41. Galvez to Cruzat, General Archives of the Indies, Seville. Shortly after the defeat of De la Balme the people of Vincennes appealed to Cruzat for assistance, but this he felt obliged to refuse, because he considered the village by right of conquest a dependency of the United States, the allies of Spain. This reply was written December 15, 1780. Of course this answer throws no light on the attitude of Spain toward British territory in the West, but it does prove that Cruzat was acting in good faith toward the Americans in December, 1780. Fac simile from Bancroft Collection, Academy of Pacific Coast History.

Madrid paper would have us believe. The most important testimony is found in a letter of De Peyster's written at Detroit on March 17, 1781. He says: "I was favoured with your Packet of the 16th Feby on the 4th Instant. Tucker is not yet arrived hence the affair in which Mons' du Quindre acquitted himself so well [sic] the enemy returned or rather a fresh party arrived at St. Josephs and carried the Traders and the remainder of their goods off. Mr. Du Quindre arrived there the day after, but could not assemble a sufficient body to pursue them. Forty Indians had got together a few days, but as the Enemy had got too much the start they insisted upon his conducting them to Detroit in order to speak to me." (42)

De Peyster regarded the attack as made by a band of marauders and of little importance, similar in kind to the earlier one executed by the Cahokians, and there is no indication that he looked upon it as a formal military occupation of the country by the Spaniards. Yet he had learned at the Indian conference which he held just previous to the date of this letter, that Spaniards had participated in the expedition. Here the Indians excused their failure to protect the traders in the following words: "Father, I am hired by the Pottewatimies at and near St. Joseph's to acquaint you with the Reasons of having suffered the Enemy to carry off their Traders. They came to St. Joseph's at a time that all the Indians were yet at their hunt, excepting a few young men who were not sufficient to oppose one hundred white People and Eighty Indians led by Seguinack and Nakewine, who deceived them by telling them that it was the Sentiment of the Indians in general to assist the French and Spaniards—had we assembled in time, we would nevertheless have given them such a stroke as we gave those who came to St. Joseph's a few moons before." In his answer De Peyster said: "I have at different times said so much to you on the subject of the Traders and Goods entrusted with you, by the Governor of Michillimackinac, that it is needless to say any more at present—The Spaniards tell you that they are

in alliance with the Virginians and the French. They therefore offer you their hands, or threaten to destroy your women and Children—Believe me—they can never destroy them until you are simple enough to shake hands with them.” The rest of the speech painted the horrors which should follow Spanish success; but this was said to deter the Indians from forming alliances with the Spaniards, as they had threatened to do, and was not inspired by what had occurred at St. Joseph. That affair seemed so unimportant that De Peyster did not think it worth while to report that Spaniards participated in it. (43)

We have now passed in review all the sources of information that are at present available concerning the seizure of the post at St. Joseph in the year 1781; and, although upon such evidence the narrative in the Madrid Gazette can not be rejected, its grandiloquent language can be considerably discounted. It is quite evident that the expedition was conceived by the Cahokians to revenge the defeat of their friends who had been sent out by De la Balme, and that a second motive was the hope of plundering the property which was known to be unprotected at St. Joseph. It is equally evident that some of the Spanish militia participated in the attack, as they had done on previous occasions. There is no evidence that the taking of St. Joseph was in accordance with instructions from the home government or even from the governor of Louisiana. In fact the contrary is true. We are still uncertain whether the Spanish flag was raised over the village and the territory taken possession of in the name of Spain. Although the English knew nothing of this, yet it may have occurred; but, if it did, the ceremony was very hurried, for the marauders did not linger at the scene of their triumph twenty-four hours. The description of the village is sufficient to show that the British resources were in no ways impaired, nor could this slight success prevent the British making other military operations in the region, as the Spanish narrative would have its readers believe.

CLARENCE WALWORTH ALVORD.

43. Mich. Pioneer Collections, X, 453. Governor Haldimand also held the matter in a like contempt. Can. Arch. 98, 46.

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Handwritten scribbles and numbers, possibly including '79'.

